

Braley and Hare Urge House Transportation Leaders to Prioritize I-74 Bridge in Upcoming Highway Bill

Today, Rep. Braley and Rep. Hare sent a letter pushing for a "Mega Project" Grant Fund in Highway Bill, which could help expedite construction of I-74 bridge

Washington, DC - Rep. Bruce Braley (D-Iowa) and Rep. Phil Hare (D-Illinois) today urged House Transportation Committee leaders to include a "mega project" grant fund in the 2009 Highway Bill for infrastructure projects that are too large to receive adequate assistance through most traditional highway grant programs. A mega-project grant fund could help speed the completion of the new I-74 bridge in the Quad Cities by more quickly funding the project.

"Speeding the replacement of the I-74 bridge will have big economic benefits for the Quad Cities region," Braley said. "Not only will the bridge project create construction jobs, it will help boost the local economy and improve highway safety in the long term. During this economic crisis, we should be doing everything we can to expedite this important project."

"The I-74 Bridge remains in desperate need of replacement," Hare said. "Expediting this critical construction project will create jobs in the Quad Cities, boost the local economy, and provide a safe pathway to and from Iowa."

The I-74 bridge across the Mississippi River is rated as "functionally obsolete." The bridge was designed to handle only 50,000 vehicles per day but currently carries nearly 78,000 vehicles per day.

The text of Braley and Hare's letter follows.

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May 6, 2009

Chairman Jim Oberstar

Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure

2165 Rayburn HOB

Washington, DC 20515

Ranking Member John Mica

Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure

2163 Rayburn HOB

Washington, DC 20515

Chairman Peter DeFazio

Subcommittee on Highways & Transit

B-370A Rayburn HOB

Washington, DC 20515

Ranking Member John Duncan

Subcommittee on Highways & Transit

B-375 Rayburn HOB

Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Oberstar, Ranking Member Mica, Chairman DeFazio, and Ranking Member Duncan:

Thank you for your hard work and leadership on the Surface Transportation Reauthorization bill. We write to encourage you to ensure that the bill contains funding options for "mega-projects" - projects which are central to American interstate commerce, but which are too large to receive adequate assistance through most traditional highway grant programs.

One example of a project of this magnitude is the replacement of the Interstate 74 Bridge over the Mississippi River between Bettendorf, IA and Moline, IL. This project is integral to our nation's commerce, as it provides redundancy for freight movement to Interstates 80 and 280, spans the Midwest, and provides for the movement of people and freight to employment centers, entertainment venues and commercial and industrial sites. However, the bridge is severely over-capacity, and is in need of replacement.

We encourage you to include in the Surface Transportation Reauthorization legislation a Department of Transportation grant program that would allow for funding of projects of this magnitude. We request that the program have the following criteria:

- Program is designed to only fund projects which have a total cost over \$750 million;
- Projects are only funded that have a completed Final Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision, which demonstrates project readiness, and can ensure job-creation in the near-term;
- Projects must involve retrofitted structures that were not initially built for their current purpose and will meet current standards with project implementation, which is in the spirit of focusing resources on repairs to our current infrastructure, instead of funding new measures while we have current repairs to be made; and

- Program funds must only be used for construction costs, which will ensure that taxpayer funds are creating jobs.

We believe that with the right criteria, a "mega-projects" grant program can focus on necessary repairs to large projects, which are critical to interstate commerce, and which will create jobs in the near-term.

Thank you for your consideration of this request, and we look forward to working with you towards this goal. Please feel free to contact us if we may be of assistance.

Sincerely,

Rep. Bruce Braley

Rep. Phil Hare